Dancing to different tunes: The growth of urban development partnerships in West Yorkshire

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Changing partners

The primacy of urban development partnerships has been declared by British government ministers since the 1977 White Paper on inner cities. But during this period the ideological underpinnings of the partnership mode of working has been continuously reworked. In 1977, under a Labour government, it was a partnership between central and local government which was being advocated. With the election of a Conservative government in 1979, it was very quickly established that this partnership would be changed, bringing the private sector centre stage. Throughout the 1980s successive Conservative central governments ostensibly sought to 'roll back the frontiers of the state', reducing the powers and funding of local government, centralising more and more power to central government and its quangos, whilst privatising more and more erstwhile state functions. In the case of urban policy, this involved reducing the access of local government to government funding regimes (for instance City Grant, which local authorities can not apply for) and reducing the amounts allocated to local authority managed initiatives, such as the Urban Programme. In the little remarked upon first Action for Cities document (Department of Environment, 1987), local government was blamed for creating many of the problems of the inner cities, in particular the so-called 'social engineering' of building large public sector housing estates.
This conveniently ignored that it was actually central government which played the major facilitating role: some of the same civil servants who had helped bring about these policies now sought to join ministers in blaming local authorities.

A parallel theme involved bringing private sector interests into a range of non-democratic, locally-based organisations, such as Urban Development Corporations (UDCs) and Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs). In the case of UDCs, planning powers were taken away from local authorities and given to them, together with major financial resources, and a mandate to engage in property-led local regeneration.

By 1988, in the widely heralded second Action for Cities document (Cabinet Office, 1988), the government of the day was prepared to make the chilling declaration that "business knows best", and would therefore be well-positioned to take a lead role in devising and delivering inner city policy. Local authorities do not receive a mention at all, in a document which not surprisingly was not considered sufficiently strong to form the basis for a White Paper. Rarely has a government been so wrong-headed in its blustering pursuit of a narrow ideological agenda. Certainly, some local authorities in the 1970s had taken an adversarial position towards the private sector, and this did need to be replaced with a genuine partnership; but attempts to cast the private sector in the lead role were not just premature and unwarranted, but actually in some part counter-productive. Many business leaders fought shy of assuming a lead responsibility with such a loaded political agenda, seeking to avoid creating antagonisms with elected local authorities. This said, there have been some benefits too in the Action for Cities campaign, most notably in the attempt to foster a sense of moral responsibility towards the inner city for many organisations and individuals in the private sector.

Government ministers in this period had taken to almost ritualistic visits to learn from the United States urban policy experience. Unfortunately, by concentrating their attentions on a few east coast cities, and even worse by concentrating on flagship development projects, the ministers managed miraculously to arrive home having learnt none of the really important lessons of the US partnership experience in urban regeneration. Senior civil servants ended up having to tell government ministers that it was becoming unseemly for them to keep going to the same few cities and bringing back their policies: the prospect of visiting cities with major social problems seemed enough to deter most ministers after that. Nonetheless, in this brief period of enchantment with US urban policy, the British government managed to ignore key lessons, such as: the need for major government investment programmes, the inability of the private sector to invest significantly in non-commercial projects, and the need to build local leadership in tandem with the local democratic process, not outside it (Parkinson, 1988; Hambleton, 1991). Instead of a widely based strategy, which formally incorporates local government, community groups and trade unions, UK central government policies for urban regeneration in the late 1980s sought to create a narrowly constituted form of partnership between the private sector and central government.

Not surprisingly, the 1988 Action for Cities suite of policies which resulted has been largely discredited. This narrow vision of partnership proved expensive, ineffective and unwanted, even by large parts of the private sector. The flagship Urban Development Corporations in particular have largely proven unpopular, ineffectual, and costly. Even accepting the narrow remit of intervention in failing local land markets, their record has been no better than that of local authorities, with most UDCs able to claim some successes, and usually some failures. Indeed, a number of UDCs have been left with large losses after engaging in major land buying activities at the peak of the false credit boom of 1988, with unsold land subsequently falling in value. Enterprise Zones are possibly the most costly form of inner city government intervention yet devised, in terms of cost per job, whilst City Grant continues as a means of leveraging in public subsidy of profits on private sector development, the very reason why UDA, the US scheme on which it is based, was abandoned. The consortium of developers announced at the launch of Action for Cities, which was reportedly set to take the lead in urban regeneration investment, soon disbanded, having achieved little or nothing of substance.

Quite deliberately, then, the partnerships which central government was seeking to foster in the 1980s were not partnerships of equals. Indeed, the 1989 Local Government and Housing Act, with its restrictive clauses on local government involvement in partnerships, seems to have deliberately set out to deter joint developments by private developers and local authorities. Many private sector players were unhappy with these arrangements, with most developers recognising the positive contributions which local government can make. Outside the arena of urban policy as such, however, it does need to be stressed that central government cutbacks on local authority powers and funding did force a new climate of pragmatism amongst even the most left-wing local authorities. In order to increase the sum of investment available for their cities, many urban political leaders started to explore the prospects for local development partnerships with the private sector.

By the early 1990s, the mood and tempo of central government's approach to local partnerships began to change once more. With the introduction of City Challenge (1991), English Partnerships (1993) and Single Regeneration Budgets (1994), it appears that once again local
authorities are being seen as potential lead players in local regeneration initiatives. City Challenge, for instance, with its competition for funding over five years for comprehensive, small area development, requires that a new partnership vehicle is created, which includes both private sector interests and the relevant local authority, plus other local community interest groups.

Learning to dance together

Old steps, new steps

The strange combination of central government incentives and obstacles to urban regeneration partnerships since 1977 has clearly not deterred the emergence of some interesting and innovative forms of locally based partnerships emerging (Harding, 1990; Whitney and Haughton, 1990). One reason for this rich vein of experience is that it was not simply central government policy which was leading the drive towards partnership working. Some of the main external impulses shaping partnership evolution in the UK have already been noted, especially the changing national political scene. In addition, it is worth noting the shift in government planning and urban policy in favour of using existing urban land over further outward encroachment on the edge of cities, whilst the growth of service industries in the 1970s and 1980s was in large part concentrated still in the city centres. As city centre land prices rose, reclaiming old industrial sites became increasingly financially viable. Of related importance has been the legacy of large sites left by the demise of large scale industry and the public utilities (rail, electricity, gas, docklands, canals etc.). Although the land involved was often heavily contaminated, the sites generally presented fewer problems in terms of land assembly and physical access than, for instance, inner area abandoned warehouses in multiple ownership and with constricted street patterns. Of uncertain impact were the changes in UK company tax regimes, the rapid growth of British pension funds, many of which sought to invest some proportion of their funds domestically, with land and property investment at one stage seeming to provide higher and more secure returns than many other options. Similarly, some banks had been badly hit by having to write-off overseas debts, and began to favour the greater political and legal security offered by supporting domestic investors.

There were other more localised pressures which helped shape these external events and trends, most notably the emergence of local political pragmatism and related attempts to tap into new sources of finance. For the private sector partners, local authorities retained important planning and compulsory purchase powers, plus considerable holdings of land in some cases. Perhaps most importantly, cooperation with local authorities was seen to lend legitimacy to development projects, because of their local democratic mandate through the electoral process. This can be an important element in gaining community acceptance for potentially controversial projects in particular. For the public sector, the main gains have been in accessing the funding and project management expertise of the private sector. Both sectors have also increasingly sought to tap the local legitimacy and knowledge of local communities, helping to improve project design and to increase the beneficial impacts on the local area, whilst also expediting the process of planning application and appeal by minimising local objections and creating community-based pre-development pressures.

This summary is a greatly simplified reduction of the evolution of contemporary forms of locally-based partnership cooperation, which at their best are based on an acceptance of the benefits of shared responsibilities and mutual learning. In the process some of the earlier distinctiveness of the separate sectors has become blurred at the edges: a new brand of public sector entrepreneurialism has emerged in some parts of the local government sector (Rose, 1986; Parkinson, 1989), whilst parts of the private sector have become increasingly concerned about the need for meaningful regional and local strategic planning to provide a secure basis for their investments. This in turn has created a pressure to undertake strategic planning using different techniques to those of the 1960s and 1970s (Bryson and Roering, 1987), and the need to provide a secure strategic framework to reduce the risk in private development. A further important development has been the formation of local growth coalitions with their own strategic vision for a city (Cooke, 1988; Lloyd and Newlands, 1988).

At root, however, there remains a series of incompatibilities between the public, private and community sectors. The private sector inevitably is concerned to generate profits for its own survival. For this reason, the private sector is unlikely to invest heavily in social projects, except in so far as physical development projects exist with a commercial return, for instance building a local community centre. This recognition quickly led to the CBI declaring that business alone could not solve all urban problems and calling for partnership (Brandenberg, 1988). This said, there are a range of ways in which both self-interest and social responsibility can combine to reward businesses which engage in community-based partnerships, including long-term benefits such as helping foster a local economic upturn, bringing new business and a better local environment, the development of a better qualified local skills pool, improved employee motivation, and an improved company image to project to both potential employees and customers (Christie, 1991).

More immediately and more pragmatically perhaps, a range of linkage
and planning gain related schemes have been devised, whereby the private sector has made social or infrastructure investments, particularly when these have been in mitigation of any adverse local impacts of development. This fits in with an often expressed view that the public sector should only get involved in development with grants to provide the profit margin on otherwise non-viable schemes, or to take a slice of the profit in development projects with high margins. This thought is a narrow view, as the debate on environmental pricing demonstrates. The argument here is that since urban development is riddled with hidden community costs (e.g. increased traffic in an area) and hidden subsidies (especially in public infrastructure provision for private projects), public authorities have a legitimate role in gaining as much local benefit from a development project as possible.

There is also a risk issue: the public sector has a legitimate interest in minimising private risk through providing a strategic planning framework, but it is now generally agreed the public sector has no legitimate role in undertaking commercial development projects with risks attached. More than anything, however, contemporary partnerships cast the local authority in particular as the agency which undertakes to shoulder the political risk, particularly in respect of the possibility of strong community opposition. West Yorkshire has evolved its own variant theme on these partnership working schemes, with the emergence of joint venture companies which have ostensibly provided a cross-subsidy between projects with relatively high returns and those with low or no commercial return (Whitney and Haughton, 1990), a form of working which has not been without its critics, as we shall see later.

*Marks for style, content and form*

Given this background, it is inevitably difficult to evaluate the success of the partnership mode of operation, not least since 'process', building trust, ownership and so on, is often in the long-term at least as important as the 'product', for instance building a new shopping centre. In addition, each partnership is likely to have different objectives and different systems of accountability: they are indeed dancing to different tunes.

Our approach in this chapter is to take up the story of development partnerships in the five district authorities of West Yorkshire, taking as our starting point an early study of partnerships in the area (Whitney and Haughton, 1990). The present study broadens the scope of the analysis to look at the increasing numbers of partnerships in each district and, where appropriate, the ways in which they either compete with or complement each other. In this study, the intention is to seek to evaluate the process of partnership working at the area level, rather than the product, that is the jobs created, land reclaimed and added office and factory floorspace. The fieldwork on which this review is based was completed in summer 1993, involving talks with the major physical development-related partnerships operating in West Yorkshire at that time. Some occasional up-dating material is included here, where events are known to have changed significantly in the period through to summer 1994.

**Dancing the partnership waltz in West Yorkshire**

In the nineteenth century, private philanthropists such as Sir Titus Salt played a prominent role in shaping West Yorkshire towns and cities, from building new 'model villages' such as Saltaire, to contributing to public buildings, monuments and parks. There had been a partnership of sorts between the public and private sectors, if only because so many leading business interests were active in the political lives of their towns and cities. Business leaders often played an active role in both the politics of their towns and in industry lobby groups, using both to further their own interests.

However, over time local governments tended to emerge in their own right as the lead players in development in their areas. For much of the twentieth century, private sector interest receded in terms of shaping urban development and providing leadership, in part as public sector resources and indeed responsibilities increased. Local governments came to be seen to be synonymous with promoting local interests, and in pursuing this they only rarely had recourse to separate private sector organisations as formal 'partners'. This is not to say that the public and private sectors did not work together in the first three-quarters of the century: they clearly did in a wide range of ways, but these increasingly tended to be ad hoc, contract-based relationships, such as building Arndale Centres in the 1960s. It was the local authorities which provided the vision at this time, and from the 1960s, some also increasingly began to take on the development of many of the major construction projects using their own direct labour forces.

However, from the early 1980s onwards, following central government exhortation, financial restrictions on local government, and private sector attempts to tap into public subsidy in particular, a new generation of public-private partnership activity was born in West Yorkshire.

**Bradford**

The partnership scene in Bradford revolves around two almost 'traditional' style, single site development arrangements, plus a still largely dormant joint venture company-style deal, of the type pioneered in Kirklees and
Wakefield. In addition, two central government originated partnerships have also emerged in recent years, Bradford City Challenge and the Bradford and District Training and Enterprise Council.

For many years, the city council has been regarded as the key player in the local economy, with most other players happy to follow its lead. This relative satisfaction with local government performance, together with the desire not to add to local political tensions, was one of the reasons why it proved difficult at first to find a Chairperson for the new Training and Enterprise Council (ECOTEC and CUDEM, 1991). Another reason for this apparent lack of dynamism in the business sector was the relatively dormant nature of the local Chamber of Commerce, whilst the more recently formed, alternative business lobby, Bradford Breakthrough remains a marginal player of limited capacity and local significance. The TEC has emerged as a relatively important player in the local scene, with a cluster of local representative forums clustered around its activities, including a Compact scheme and an Education Business Partnership.

A social partnership, or joint venture company-style operation, was initiated in 1991, linking the local authority to the private development company Bovis. This followed newspaper advertisements seeking potential partners, with Bovis selected from a shortlist of five. The intention of the social partnership, in part following similar ventures in Kirklees and Wakefield, was to enable the local authority to recycle some element of the surplus from major developments towards community benefits, whilst also ensuring that the chosen preferred partner satisfied certain standards in terms of trade union recognition and training. The Bovis arrangement requires no financial input from the local authority, whilst allocating a significant slice of the operational surplus to the council.

The two single site development partnerships both have features of broader interest. The West End development involves a multi-use scheme for an area in the centre of the city, concentrating on leisure and recreation functions. The concept of creating a vibrant, cohesive cultural quarter within the city, building from existing attractions such as the National Film and Photographic Museum, the Alhambra Theatre, and two cinemas, was initiated by the local authority planning department. Throughout, the local authority has been a central player in terms of concept development, land assembly and community consultation. In the early phase, two development companies were centrally involved in the project. However, after eighteen months it became evident that having two developers was not working, due to a certain tension between them. Having decided to work with just one of the developers, both were asked by the local authority to make formal presentations to the steering group, resulting in one of them becoming the preferred partner. This partnership is still very much alive, and working

towards its goals.

The other single site development concerns a major redevelopment around Bradford Forster Square railway station, on land owned by British Rail Properties. This proposal dates back to 1985, and was originally to involve major land clearance and a move for the station, in order to provide a retail-based development. In addition to British Rail, the Burton Group became a formal partner. Whilst the land clearance and station move went ahead, with local authority support in both this and bringing forward stage III of the adjoining ring road, in 1991 the retail recession led Burtons to pull out of the partnership. At this stage, a new planning brief was requested by British Rail, with a changed emphasis, in favour of an office-led development. Although not abandoned, this project does demonstrate the riskiness of public sector involvement in providing basic infrastructure for commercial projects, whether as part of a formal partnership or not. In May 1994, however, a new £30m shopping and leisure scheme was announced for the area, involving Railtrack Properties, Bovis and St. James Securities. It appears as if both the Bovis partnership and the Forster Square partnership are beginning to bear fruit.

Of more recent vintage is the Bradford City Challenge partnership. One of the successful first round bids in 1991, the Bradford City Challenge area lies to the south east of the city, centred on Holmead, a large post war local authority outer estate, with mainly white residents. In addition, the area stretches in wedge-style towards the city centre, covering an area of private housing in poor repair, with significant ethnic minority populations. In total, 43,000 people live in the area. The City Challenge approach is to combine economic, educational, housing and social projects, recognising the complexity and inter-relatedness of local problems. The Board of the City Challenge company includes public sector, business and community representatives. In partnership terms, Bradford City Challenge is especially interesting in terms of its empowerment of sub-Board level groups. Covering areas ranging from economy to child care, these sub-Board groups can be given their own devolved budgets. One of the sub-groups has taken this devolution to the stage of setting itself up as a separate company, working in pursuit of its own specific goals within the broader City Challenge programme.

Initially envisaged by the city council as a means for seeing power cascading down from the Town Hall to the neighbourhood level, the reality so far is more prosaic, with local initiative still stifled by Treasury restrictions on spending patterns and powers. Nonetheless, Bradford City Challenge represents a significant innovation in the area, where power is devolved to sub-groups which frequently have substantial autonomy in pursuing their work agendas and high levels of local representation.
Overall, the partnership scene in Bradford has emerged from one where the city council was almost invariably both catalyst and major player, to a situation where both the private and community sectors have become much more influential players. In large part this is a situation which has the local authority's blessing, as part of a pragmatic acceptance of their own dwindling resources and the additional resources which can be tapped into by agencies such as City Challenge. There is, however, a real danger that the partnership platform is becoming over-crowded: the danger of this is that people are having to join increasing numbers of partnerships simply to remain well-networked, whilst certain key players are likely to become overstretched, distracting them from their own core concerns. Recognising this, an informal ('magic circle') group of city leaders and partnership representatives, the Oakwood Group, was established in 1992-1993, seeking to rationalise partnership-related activities and avoid duplication. This private gathering, however, did not provide a strategic partnership vision for Bradford, which was perhaps the missing 'ingredient' at that time. However, in March 1994 a new partnership was announced, Bradford Congress, which intends to address this very issue. This grew out of the Oakwood Group, and was inspired in some part by the local Chamber of Commerce. Bradford Congress remains very much embryonic, but it is clearly seeking to create a widely based, public forum for promoting strategic thinking and development in the area.

**Calderdale**

Calderdale hosts one of the longest standing formal partnerships in West Yorkshire, the Calderdale Inheritance project. This represents a very distinctive form of partnership, one which is much more rooted in local authority control than the other partnership vehicles discussed in this chapter. Calderdale Inheritance does not have a separate company structure or even an independent board: instead, being largely funded by the local authority, it has been accountable through a number of council committees and sub-committees. The project was set up in 1985, as part of a ten year Inheritance Decade. In all this, two reports from the Civic Trust were central. These recognised the richness of the built environment in the district, and suggested regeneration strategies which centred on improving the existing urban fabric, in particular its historical components. The partnership component was seen as an integral element of this, not least since many of the most important buildings and sites were owned by private sector interests. The approach adopted to partnership involved two main strands of work: working with private sector partners as part of individual projects, plus seeking to gain support for the central programme unit, which came variously in the shape of seconded workers from both the private sector and central government, and provision of support in kind, such as free use of a mechanical digger and free supplies of paving materials.

Given that Calderdale is a relatively small area, these forms of ad hoc relationships were probably a more fruitful avenue of support in resource terms than any other arrangements which could be envisaged at that time. However, this very limited definition of partnership did attract in, and provide the space for, new, competing partnerships. Drawn by the success of Calderdale Inheritance, the public support of HRH the Prince of Wales, and the success of Ernest Hall in converting Dean Clough Mills from an abandoned carpet factory to a vibrant office complex. Business in the Community (BITC) adopted Halifax as a pilot for its one-town regeneration partnerships. Although this project received support from high level executives based in the town, in truth it appears to have floundered throughout its existence, lacking a clear rationale and distinctive rationale in the face of the work already being undertaken by Calderdale Inheritance. With limited additional funding available, and with few obvious new projects to work upon, the new partnership never gained momentum. In a small area, with one major player already on the scene, the partnership platform at that time was too small to support the aspirations of an additional major player. In 1989, BITC pulled out of Halifax, leaving in its wake the Calderdale Partnership Project Company Limited. Neither venture appears to have achieved much of consequence in physical terms, however.

Other tensions emerged at this time too, not least with the announced intention in 1988 to close the United Biscuits KP Foods factory in Halifax, with the loss of 1,000 jobs. This provoked an outcry locally, since the United Biscuits chairman was also national chairman of BITC (York Consulting and CUDEM, 1993). The Labour-led council of the day came very close to abandoning the Calderdale Inheritance project at this time. This was in part a reaction to the tensions which arose from the factory closure, but it also stemmed from a long-standing concern amongst some local politicians that Calderdale Inheritance's attempts to improve the town centre environment would create a 'candyfloss economy', that is one based on tourism, whilst ignoring the social problems of adjacent wards. In the event, motivated in part by the prospect of losing the prominent support afforded to the town by the Prince of Wales (as President of BITC and a supporter of Calderdale Inheritance), and strong lobbying from a senior council officer, councillors opted instead to create a parallel partnership vehicle for social investment, Fair Shares (Community Development). This lasted through to 1992, when with a change in political control of the council, Fair Shares was abandoned, whilst the commitment to Calderdale Inheritance was maintained.

The project portfolio of Calderdale Inheritance initially ranged from
improving shop frontages in central Halifax, to mill conversion and industrial estate preparation. However, in the 1990s, a new direction in its work began to emerge, involving a considerable decentralisation of responsibility. First in Brighouse, and later in Todmorden, locally-based partnerships were encouraged, which began to establish their own strategies, and to tap into local concerns and resources. This allowed a much clearer articulation of local interests, and involved the Halifax-based Calderdale Inheritance team adopting a new role, of central advisory body, with decentralised team members working with the individual partnerships. In this way, the partnership can be seen to have begun to have come out of its period of political crisis in the late 1980s to develop, in an organic fashion, a new modus operandi for itself (see York Consulting and CUDEM, 1993, for more details of partnership development in the district).

**Kirklees**

In 1987 Kirklees Council decided to foster a long term relationship with a private developer as part of its attempts to bring about social and economic regeneration in the area. The concept involved a rolling programme of development projects, where profitable schemes would subsidise social or otherwise unviable schemes. A list of possible development projects was prepared by the local authority and circulated to interested companies, together with an invitation to them to forward their own proposals relating both to the mix of schemes and to the principles of financial arrangements.

Kirklees examined each potential partner's commitment to training, their willingness to seek tenders for construction work and aspects of the philosophies of the firms. Discussions culminated in the selection of Henry Boot in 1988. It was decided that a joint venture company (JVC) would be the preferred vehicle for the partnership, with the company being formally launched in February 1989.

The structure and mode of working of the JVC can be briefly summarised. Each partner has three directors on the Board, the company operating by consensus, with the Managing Director being one of the Henry Boot directors and the Chairman being the leader of Kirklees Council. Each partner has invested equal amounts of capital in the company and each receives the same rate of return on its investment. The partners have agreed on a reduced rate of return, leaving an enhanced profit available, which is co-ventanted to charities to carry out social schemes. In essence, therefore, the JVC aims to carry out development projects within Kirklees and to generate profits to invest in social schemes. The JVC will in general only carry out profitable schemes, with both partners receiving only their agreed and fixed commission.

Perhaps surprisingly, a development momentum has been maintained, and joint commitment by the partners has been preserved, despite the vicissitudes of the property recession. The partners have reduced the large scale of the original rolling programme, in recognition of economic difficulties, whilst not fundamentally altering its focus or central objectives.

There is the locally contentious question of possible exclusivity of dealing between Kirklees Council and Henry Boot, which certainly attracts some local criticism. For its critics, the JVC is seen as a 'closed shop', and even as a form of 'planning blight' acting as a deterrent to other investment interests. In terms of planning clearance, it is acknowledged by the Partnership that 'a little more attention' before application is observed, to ensure agreement is reached on submitted schemes, pre-empting any embarrassment of refusals. However, in terms of land dealings the Partnership is not given a monopoly of Council-owned land, there being a long-established Council policy of providing land to developers or end-users as appropriate to promote development. Where the Partnership has been chosen as preferred developer for retail or other high value schemes, it has sometimes been justified on the grounds that Henry Boot is taking a lower than normal developer's profit, which means that development profit is available for spending on social projects.

More recently, other forms of joint working have been established within Kirklees. The Kirklees Stadium Development Ltd. is a partnership linking the Council, Huddersfield Town FC and Huddersfield Rugby League Club to promote construction and operation of a leisure and retail park and encompassing a new stadium for the two teams. In addition, a more voluntaristic style of partnership is exemplified by the formation of the Kirklees Churches Partnership in 1993, bringing together the Council and the Church of England in the first instance to pursue a wide range of schemes in the inner areas of Huddersfield. This arrangement has its origin in work undertaken by the Council, the Church Urban Fund and local enterprise in Huddersfield. Its work programme includes projects embracing children in need, homelessness, community care and economic regeneration.

The other key operative partnership structure in Kirklees is Batley City Challenge, covering a territory of 350 hectares and encompassing a population of 20,000. The City Challenge project emerged from a bid made in July 1992 and culminated in an approved Action Plan in March 1993. In parallel with other City Challenge initiatives, its strategic objectives are comprehensive and multi-sectoral, involving the active collaboration of a wide cross-section of actors and interests.

Batley Action, as its executive company, has the local authority leader as Chair and a private sector Vice Chair, together with directors drawn from the community sector (4) public agencies (3) the private sector (4) and the
local authority (2). Even in its early stages, a consultation structure was put in place to encompass as wide a spectrum as possible of local stakeholders. As part of this process, Batley City Challenge was seeking to establish a range of forums relating to different community interests, including Neighbourhood, Young Batley, Business, Property, Asian Business, Environment, Asian Community, Health, and Education and Training. In addition, a great variety of smaller formal meetings were held to advise on particular aspects of the Action Plan.

Batley City Challenge is attempting to build a structure of linkages into different interest groups within the community. There is the opportunity for a genuinely widely-based platform of interests to become involved in planning and implementation. Its very plurality, however, may itself prove problematic, as different interests struggle for resources with conflicting interpretations of community need. There is also the opportunity for local communities here to gain further recognition and empowerment in the longer term, as Batley City Challenge intends setting up from year one a Community Development Trust as successor body to itself when it exits in five years time, thereby pursuing one of its central objectives of creating a 'self' sustaining community-based partnership.

In addition to the more project-oriented partnership arrangements discussed so far, there is also the more strategic Engine for Growth Forum, formed in 1990. This provides a meeting ground for a wide platform of local interests, including the University of Huddersfield, the local Trade Unions, Huddersfield 2000 (a private sector lobby group), and the North Kirklees Engine Group (formerly Enterprise Dewsbury). This coalition of interests in 1991 produced a 'Shared Vision for Kirklees', which is intended to be a 10 year joint strategy for economic and physical regeneration across the district.

It is probably premature to make a full evaluation of the diverse and still rapidly evolving partnership scene in Kirklees. There is little doubt that the local authority and the other key players in the district see the various partnership mechanisms as central to implementing social and economic regeneration strategies for the district. At present, there are few tensions between the partnerships themselves, though there are some residual tensions between some private sector interests who feel that the various partnership vehicles may be denying them development opportunities. In addition, there is some community disquiet about the nature and even desirability of some of the plum partnership developments of the local joint development company. Given these emerging tensions, and the emergence of several new partnerships in the district, Kirklees will continue to provide a fascinating example of the partnership approach to local regeneration.

Leeds

In the first four decades after the second world war, Leeds was an almost archetypal Labour-run 'City Fathers' style council. Patrician and parochial, the City Fathers were often accused of being unimaginative in their approach to running the city. Relationships with the private sector were tepid, rather than either cool or warm.

Faced with a seemingly hostile Conservative national government, an attempt to fend off the imposition of an Urban Development Corporation, in 1988 the city council revived and re-launched its relatively dormant land and property development vehicle, the Leeds City Development Company (LCDC). This had been set up initially in the early 1980s, but only assumed real significance when it became politically expedient to demonstrate that a strong partnership with the private sector existed locally. As an attempt to remove the threat of a UDC it failed, with the Leeds Development Corporation (LDC) being announced by central government in the same year. For two or three years, the LCDC came to be a central player in Leeds, with its proposals for Kirkstall Valley, part of the UDC area, informally accepted by the LDC. The LCDC had initially sought to work with just two developers, and to great public fanfare declared that this would lead to multi-million pound investments in the city. Little of this was to materialise, and by the early 1990s one of the private developers was declared bankrupt. In practice, the LCDC operated with a much wider range of developers, working on individual sites, usually owned by the city council, as appropriate. Separately constituted with a board of directors including private sector interests, the LCDC was notable in that unlike many council estates department it was prepared not only to buy land and build a portfolio, but to sell it, working closely with the private sector. For a while, it was the biggest developer in Leeds. The LCDC is still a player locally, but operates in a relatively low key way in terms of partnership activity.

Given the fraught local political tensions surrounding its designation, not surprisingly, the Leeds Development Corporation met with a frosty political reception in its first few months. Surprisingly quickly, however, the local political temper changed, in part following changes in local political leadership. Out of this was born a pragmatic concern to work with both central government quangos and private sector interests, seeking to maximise leverage over central government and private sector financial resources. Born at the peak of a property boom, and almost immediately plunged into a deep property slump, the LDC has inevitably not achieved all its aims. It has, however, been successful in helping facilitate the promotion of development along the River Aire in the city centre, a process which was already well underway in 1988. It has also engaged in considerable environmental works,
which have made valuable visual improvements to much of the LDC area. The LDC is also credited by some as taking the lead role in attracting the Royal Armories to Leeds, working through the Leeds Initiative.

It is the Leeds Initiative which provides the most interesting form of partnership currently operating in Leeds. Set up in 1990, rather than a commercial, project-led style of partnership, the Leeds Initiative acts much more as a strategic forum. Its nearest approximation in West Yorkshire is the Kirklees Engine for Growth Forum. The main meetings involve Top-level representatives from the city council, regional offices of central government, the Chamber of Commerce, the two universities, the regional TUC, the LDC, the City Action Team, Yorkshire Television and Yorkshire Post Newspapers, and the Leeds TEC. It is chaired by the leader of the local authority, with the chief executive of the Chamber of Commerce acting as the vice-chairperson.

Strictly speaking the Leeds Initiative has no formal legal constitution or legal status. It is not a separate company or an arm of the local authority. Whilst the Leeds Initiative at 'board' level has provided a strategy document and broad agenda of activities, its real power appears to lie in the second tier of thematic sub-groups, such as the Leeds Engineering Initiative and the Gateways and Corridors group. These have tremendous organisational and constitutional flexibility. The Engineering Initiative has a full-time executive, whilst others rely on an informal approach, sometimes served by a city council officer acting as part-time secretariat. One of the most important features of these sub-groups is their ability to draw in additional expertise from across the city, and indeed it is only at this level that community groups get to have a say. To date, the achievements of the sub-groups have mainly been in coordinating the investment intentions of individual partners. At the higher level, the Leeds Initiative appears to have played a major role in attracting the Royal Armories Museum to the city, and, perhaps of greater long-term importance, in alleviating some of the tensions between the local authority and both central government and private sector interests.

**Wakefield**

Wakefield District exemplifies several types of collaborative partnership working arrangements and structures. Perhaps the most notable of these is 'Wakefield Works'. This partnership, set up in 1989, involves the local authority and Amec Regeneration. The arrangement has endured through a difficult recessionary period, and it has delivered a number of developmental benefits. Working with the local authority, Amec retrieved and completed in its entirety an extensive town centre redevelopment scheme in Castleford when the local authority encountered funding difficulties with other developers. It has also worked with the local authority within a rolling programme on a range of small and some larger scale developments across the District, entering as appropriate into tightly and formally drawn up contractual relationships. These contrast sharply with the informal Memorandum of Understanding which is all that 'binds' the umbrella partnership. Examples of projects undertaken as part of the rolling programme range from the extensive site investigation at the former Glasshoughton colliery site in Castleford, to examining the development opportunities of the former Wakefield power station site. Clearly confidence and trust have been at a premium in such an informal relationship.

Although the first two rounds of City Challenge were only open to designated Urban Programme authorities, which do not include Wakefield, in 1992 the district attempted to secure Central Government funding support for the Castleford area using a very similar multi-partner, multi-sector regeneration model. This was called the Castleford Integrated Regeneration Project (CIRP), and envisaged a widely-based partnership of public, commercial and community-related interests, focusing on a five-year regeneration programme. The CIRP or 'Son of City Challenge' bid area covered 2,144 ha and encompassed a population of approximately 36,000. The local authority urged that a comprehensive regeneration programme was needed, encompassing local economic development, housing, community and health development and environmental improvements to provide the framework for long-term public and private investment. Discussions at the preparatory stage of the bid revealed a great deal of local enthusiasm for such an initiative and Central Government too reportedly responded with interest. However, it has not proceeded and in a sense remains a 'stillborn' initiative, although it could potentially serve as a basis for future bidding purposes.

Linked to European funding on the other hand, in one of the few cross-district partnerships in West Yorkshire, Wakefield has been party to the Mid-Yorkshire Operational Programme. This covers the travel to work areas of Wakefield and Dewsbury and of Castleford and Pontefract, comprising Wakefield District Council, Dewsbury in Kirklees, part of Selby District and part of the Bradford Travel to Work Area. Involving a partnership of local authorities, the European Community, Central Government Departments and infrastructure agencies, since 1990 the Mid-Yorkshire Operational Programme has funded a wide range of projects implemented under the first and second phases of the programme. An application has now been made for a Mid-Yorkshire Operational Programme Phase III to continue and extend the use of European Structural Funding resources to 1999. This is seen as moving beyond the locally defined sets of projects which characterised Phase One and Two, towards a co-ordinated strategic programme based on the
comprehensive economic development strategies of its component local authorities.

The Wakefield partnership experience is very diverse. In addition to the private sector centred arrangements already outlined, there have been close working relationships over recent years between the local authority and both the Department of the Environment and British Coal, working on an extensive programme of land reclamation using Derelict Land Grant. Also, there has been a very specific form of close co-operation with Groundwork and the local authority, where since 1985 the latter has part funded a broad range of environmental improvement projects.

**West Yorkshire overview**

In the Calderdale Inheritance project, the joint venture companies (notably Kirklees and Wakefield) and in the Leeds Initiative, West Yorkshire arguably hosts some of the most important exemplar partnership arrangements in the country. So how successful have the various initiatives been, individually and collectively? Individually, they each have their detractors, but it is fair to say that in each case, in their absence, major regeneration projects would have been left undone, whilst others have simply been designed and implemented more successfully. This is true of both the locally-initiated schemes and those developed by central government. What the locally-based schemes in particular have begun to do in some cases, is to help improve relationships between the public and private sectors. Alternatively, in the face of a barrage of criticism, it is perhaps surprising, but true to say that it is only with central government-funded City Challenge projects that community groups have been accorded a central role in these partnerships.

In terms of overall resources and impacts, partnership spending remains small. This is especially true relative to the separate spending programmes of the private and public sectors. In some cases the partnership arrangements have done little more than act as conduits for investments which were always going to happen. However, this is in a sense not a fair criterion to judge partnerships by. They have improved inter-sectoral collaboration, reducing mutual hostility. In the process, some new investment has been attracted to the region; more importantly some investment intentions have been brought forward; some investments have been reshaped to meet the partnership strategy, perhaps with some improvement in quality; and, some investments have been deliberately dovetailed with the spending of other partners, aiming to create a whole which is larger than the sum of its parts. In these terms, the achievements of partnership in the region are already substantial. There have been some faltering steps along the way, and it will be important to listen and respond to criticisms, learning from past mistakes. With this caveat in mind, as mutual trust grows and as new partnership vehicles are experimented with, the partnership momentum is likely to be maintained, hopefully creating increasing benefits along the way.

**One final twirl**

Those involved in the many West Yorkshire development partnerships have already begun the difficult process of adapting both to their own successes and failures, and to a changing external environment. Faltering first steps have been succeeded by more assured manoeuvring. As trust has grown, there has been a discernable shift from working on single projects to a more strategic, area-wide concern for promoting regeneration. Moving from simple development schemes to strategic thinking has been the most important partnership trend in West Yorkshire in recent years. Individual development partnerships are still important, but they can now be seen as ingredients within a broader strategic framework for partnership activity.

No single model of successful partnership emerges from this review, only a variety of ingredients which each partnership might want to pick from as it develops and grows over time. Indeed, perhaps the only real model for successful partnership is the anti-model, where partnerships avoid adhering to rigid blueprints, and instead seek to draw on the wider experience, whilst always developing their own distinctive characters, reflecting local needs and resources.

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6 Local sourcing initiatives in West Yorkshire: An evaluation of their effectiveness

Colin C. Williams

Introduction

Local sourcing is the process by which an establishment receives its inputs from other establishments located within its local economy. It is an aspect of local economic development, moreover, which has more often been ignored than adopted by agencies involved in economic revitalisation. The aim of this chapter is first, to explain why local sourcing is important to economic regeneration and second, to use local sourcing initiatives in West Yorkshire as a case study of how local sourcing initiatives operate in practice and their effectiveness, as presently practised.

The rationale for local sourcing

For many engaged in local and regional economic development, the seemingly endless drift towards more open economic systems, for instance through greater European economic integration, leads them to believe that local sourcing is an out-moded process. This chapter seeks to demonstrate that this is not the case. Instead, local sourcing will be shown to be a key weapon in the contemporary economic development armoury.

For peripheral regions such as West Yorkshire, the form of regional